PREVENTIVE ORAL HEALTH CARE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE, AND PRACTICES OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS AND PEDIATRICIANS

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Early Childhood Caries

- Affects children ages 1-6 years with rapid progression of cavities
- Advanced cases frequently require anesthesia or sedation to treat
- Advanced cases can cause systemic infection and even death
- ECC is totally preventable!
Percent of Children Receiving Preventive Dental Care in Past Year, By Age

Relevant Florida data
--with a focus on Medicaid patients

- Only 10% of Florida’s 9,496 dentists participate in Medicaid

- Only 26% of Florida Medicaid recipients enrolled at any point during the year receive dental services and only about 10% of children under age 6 receive dental services.

- 75% of physicians accept patients on public programs such as Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program
Role of Medical Providers in Preventive Dental Care

- 35 state Medicaid programs reimburse medical PCPs for providing preventive dental care.

- Florida implemented reimbursement in 2008 for children up to 3.5 years of age.

- The reimbursed procedure should include oral evaluation, risk assessment, parent counseling, FV application, and dentist referral.

- Training is not required for reimbursement, but is available through our program: Gator Kids Healthy Smiles
Objectives of the study

Objectives of our study:

1. Better understand the relationships between physicians’ oral health training and their knowledge, confidence, and practices

2. Examine the differences between family physicians and pediatricians
METHODS

- Members of the Florida Academy of Family Physicians and the Florida Pediatric Society completed self-administered questionnaire.

- Bivariate analyses were used to compare pediatricians’ and family physicians’ responses about their oral health knowledge, confidence, and practices.

- Multivariate regression analyses were used to examine the relationships between training, knowledge, confidence, and practices.
Major study areas of interest

- Physicians’ oral health knowledge in two areas: fluoride–related and non–fluoride related

- Physicians’ confidence in two areas:
  - Providing anticipatory guidance to parents
  - Performing pediatric oral health risk assessment and screening

- Frequency with which physicians perform recommended oral health services for patients < age 4 years
RESULTS

- Final sample size = 421 physicians
- Both groups reported having had prior training in oral health (79%).
- Both groups had similar levels of knowledge about non-fluoride related knowledge questions.
- Oral health training was significantly and positively associated with non-fluoride knowledge.
- Confidence had the strongest association with the frequency with which physicians performed recommended practices.
RESULTS continued

- Significant differences by physician type:
  - Family physicians were significantly less likely than pediatricians to answer fluoride–related knowledge questions correctly
  - Family physicians were less likely to report being confident
  - Pediatricians were more likely to perform recommended oral health practices
CONCLUSIONS

- Oral health training may play an important role in promoting physician confidence in performing recommended anticipatory guidance and oral health risk assessment and screening.

- Our findings of differences between family physicians and pediatricians suggest training programs should be tailored to the needs of each specialty.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors report no conflicts of interest.

Human Subjects: This study was approved by the UFHSC IRB

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